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PART-TIME WORK :
A REVIEW OF THE ISSUES

A Brief to the
Advisory Council of Employment
and Immigration Canada

by the

Canadian Advisory Council
on the Status of Women



November 1980

Canadian Advisory Council
on the Status of Women

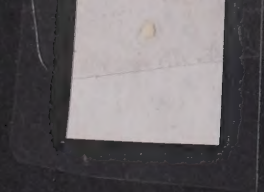
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I Introduction

Part-time work is an issue which should concern everyone since a growing proportion of all new jobs in Canada are part-time. Part-time work could play an even more important role in the economy in the future. Rapid technological progress is likely to require major labour market adjustments, including worker re-training and perhaps even the rationing of scarce jobs. Under certain circumstances, the availability of good part-time work could ease this adjustment process.

Still, there is a tendency among business and government decision-makers to think of part-time work as just another "women's issue". There are many who actually view part-time work as an accommodation to women, to enable them to combine raising a family and paid employment. However, part-time employment as it presently exists benefits business more than it benefits women. Part-time jobs at the moment are almost invariably poor jobs. The predominance of women among part-time workers in fact reflects the lack of choice many women have in the labour market. That part-time workers are not as well protected from exploitation as full-time workers further perpetuates the cycle of women's labour market disadvantage.

Thus, the CACSW contends that the question to be considered is not so much whether part-time employment opportunities should be expanded (trends suggest that they will continue to grow in number

regardless of encouragement) but how they will grow. There is an important role for government in this area. Improving the quality of part-time jobs and changing their present "marginal" status must become a priority in planning for the workplace of the future.

II The Present System of Part-time Work

The major problem with part-time work in Canada today is that it is not an integral part of the primary labour market either in theory or in practice. It constitutes a peripheral or secondary labour market where jobs are generally low skill, poorly paid, insecure, rarely unionized and offer few advancement opportunities. The majority of part-time workers are married women (45.0%) and students (30.8%).¹ Overall, women are 71.9%² of part-time workers.

Part-time Work: A Growing Phenomenon

The number of part-time jobs in Canada has grown steadily over the last few years. As inflationary pressures have squeezed profit margins, employers have reacted by increasing their use of part-time workers to reduce labour costs. Whereas an average of about 1.0 million³ workers were employed on a part-time basis in 1975, by 1979 this number had grown to slightly more than 1.3 million⁴. The number of full-time jobs in Canada has also grown since 1975. However, the growth rate of part-time employment has significantly exceeded that of full-time, with the result that a growing proportion of Canada's work force

1 Statistics Canada, The Labour Force: December 1979, (Ottawa: 1980), Table 86, p. 102. Annual averages for 1979.

2 Ibid.

3 Statistics Canada, Historical Labour Force Statistics 1979, (Ottawa: 1980) p. 51.

4 Ibid.

is employed on a part-time basis. In 1975, 10.6%⁵ of working Canadians worked part-time; in 1979, the proportion was 12.5%⁶ or 1 in every 8 workers. The disproportionate concentration of women in part-time work means that 1 in 4 working women work part-time compared with only 1 in 17 men⁷.

Part-time Jobs are Largely Unskilled Jobs

Eighty-six percent of part-time jobs in 1979 were in service producing industries, principally trade and community, business and personal services. This same service sector accounted for less than 65% of full-time jobs.⁸ The low skill requirements of most part-time jobs are reflected in the disproportionate concentration of part-time opportunities in sales, service and clerical occupations (67.1%), compared with the proportion of full-time jobs in these same three occupations (36.6%). By contrast, managers and professionals are found significantly less often among

5 Ibid.

6 Ibid.

7 Statistics Canada, The Labour Force: December 1979, (Ottawa: 1980), Table 83, p. 99.

8 Categorization of full-time and part-time jobs by industry: Statistics Canada, The Labour Force: December 1979, (Ottawa: 1980), Table 85, p. 101.

the ranks of part-time workers (16.6%) than among those who are employed full-time (23.8%)⁹.

Part-time Work is Irregular

According to Statistics Canada, a part-time worker usually averages 15 hours of work per week, slightly more than one-third of the hours usually worked by the average full-time worker¹⁰. However, it has been estimated that the majority of part-time workers do not work on a regular basis at all, rather they are "on call" and work only intermittently. A 1972 survey identified only 13.5%¹¹ of part-time workers as being employed regularly. In 1975, Marianne Bossen, author of another study on part-time employment,¹² supported this contention that casual, temporary or contingent part-time workers far outnumber regular part-time workers. Unfortunately, Bossen was unable to provide an updated economy-wide estimate of the relative proportions of part-time workers falling into these two categories, partly because of incomplete data concerning the total number of casual part-time

9 Categorization of full-time and part-time jobs by occupation: Ibid.

10 Statistics Canada, The Labour Force: December 1979, (Ottawa: 1980), Table 81, p. 97.

11 Labour Canada, Use of Regular Part-time Employees in Canadian Industry, 1972. (Ottawa: 1973), cited in Wendy Weeks, "Part-Time Work: The Business View on Second-class Jobs for Housewives and Mothers" in Atlantis, 5, No. 2 (Spring 1980), p. 88, footnote 75.

12 Marianne Bossen, Part-Time Work in the Canadian Economy, (Ottawa: Labour Canada, 1975), p. 28.

workers. Although no more recent data is available, there is little reason to doubt that regular part-time workers are still a minority. If part-time work had become substantially regularized over the intervening years, the deplorable working conditions and marginality of part-time jobs would likely have lessened, yet we have seen no such improvement.

Part-time Workers Used as a Reserve Pool of Cheap Labour

The dominant business view of part-time work holds that its primary usefulness is its flexibility and its cheapness.¹³ The irregularity of part-time work, already discussed, is a measure of the flexibility which business has indeed achieved. Much of the 'cheapness' of part-time labour stems from this irregularity.

Part-time workers are cheap to start with as a result of the low skill requirements of the jobs they perform. The undervaluing of women's work generally, together with the predominance of women among part-time

13 In her 1975 survey of Canadian firms using part-time workers, Bossen (pp. 33-34) found that employers most frequently mentioned flexibility of staffing as the primary advantage of using part-time workers. However, "cost savings [were] explicit or implicit in many of the advantages listed." Weeks (1980: pp. 72-75) on the other hand, surveying business literature, found that cost saving was seen as the major advantage of part-time employees although flexibility and efficiency in human resource management were also frequently mentioned.

workers, no doubt contributes to, or at least reinforces, the low wages paid for part-time work. Part-time workers are generally paid only for the time worked and are terminated promptly when no longer needed because they are easily replaceable. Their employment by a given firm is often short-term or intermittent; thus part-time workers frequently do not receive fringe benefits which are costly to employers.¹⁴ The irregular and unskilled nature of part-time jobs also means that there is little opportunity for advancement so that part-time workers remain perennially among the worst paid workers in Canada. While it may be true that among regular part-time workers and professionals employed part-time the situation is somewhat better, in the main, part-time workers are exploited as a cheap and reserve pool of labour.

How Has This Exploitation Gone Unnoticed?

Appreciation of the exploitation involved in maintaining this reserve pool of cheap labour is not

14 Using the federal Public Service as an example, and one might reasonably expect the government's performance as an employer to be somewhat above average, employees working less than 30 hours/week are currently denied pension and disability insurance benefits estimated at 13% of payroll costs. A recent policy announcement has committed the government to rectifying this situation. However, amendments to the Public Service Superannuation Act will be required and it is not known at this time how quickly such amendments can, or will be, introduced. Also, since October 1978, all employers have saved the cost of Unemployment Insurance premiums for employees working less than 20 hours/week as these workers were declared ineligible to participate in the Unemployment Insurance scheme.

widespread because the majority of part-time workers, married women and students, are still largely defined by their roles outside the labour market. In other words, part-time workers are not considered serious workers because the majority of them are not seen principally as workers at all! The fact that, despite their obvious lack of job security, Unemployment Insurance coverage was withdrawn from part-time workers in 1978, reflects very clearly this view of part-time work as unimportant, and the assumption that part-time workers are secondary earners whose work is not essential.

III Women and Part-time Work

Work is Still Defined in Male Terms

Women in the labour market generally continue to be disadvantaged. They are occupationally segregated, underpaid, suffer higher unemployment than men, and in many cases continue to be actively discriminated against.¹⁵

Women's participation rate in the paid labour force has traditionally been lower than that of men. At one time women dropped out of the labour market altogether following marriage or the birth of their first child. In the last few decades a two-phased participation profile has become increasingly the norm: women remaining at home while their children are young and re-entering the labour force when their children are somewhat older. In exchange for women assuming primary responsibility for children and the home, men accepted the role of "bread winner", earning the outside income necessary to support the family. This scenario is changing however. Whereas the participation rate of women over 20 was only 28.4% as recently as 1960, it grew to 38.2% in 1970, and reached 48.6%

15 See M.S. Devereaux and Edith Rechnitzer, Higher Education - Hired?, (Ottawa: Statistics Canada and Labour Canada, Women's Bureau, 1980). This study of the sex differences in employment characteristics of 1976 post-secondary graduates will quickly dispel any notion that even equally qualified young women have yet achieved equality in the labour market.

by 1979¹⁶. It is estimated that by the year 2000 between 65% and 70%¹⁷ of adult women will participate in the paid labour force. The participation rate of adult men conversely, is projected to decline to 79.2%¹⁸ by the turn of the century.

The growth in female participation reflects both women's desire to work and their need to work. Inflation has made two incomes necessary in many families. The National Council of Welfare has estimated that there would be a 51% increase in the number of poor families in Canada if wives had no earnings.¹⁹ In addition, the increasing incidence of marriage breakdown has forced many women to support themselves and their dependents.²⁰ The possibility that even the best marriage might break down in the

16 Dan Ciuriak and Harvey Sims, Participation Rate and Labour Force Growth in Canada, (Ottawa: Department of Finance Canada, 1980), Table 16, p. 54.

17 Ibid.

18 Ibid.

19 National Council of Welfare, Women and Poverty, (Ottawa: 1979), p. 20.

20 Whereas in 1968 the divorce rate per 100,000 population was 54.8, by 1978 it had risen to 243.4. Data for 1968: Statistics Canada, Vital Statistics Vol. II: Marriages and Divorces 1973 (Ottawa: 1975), Table 15, p. 73. Data for 1978: Statistics Canada, Vital Statistics Vol. II: Marriages and Divorces 1978, (Ottawa: 1980), Table 11, p. 16. In 1978, divorce created 25,536 new female-headed single-parent families. Unpublished tabulation provided by Statistics Canada, Vital Statistics Division.

future has made women aware of their economic vulnerability if they withdraw from the paid labour force for an extended period of time.

The attitudes and structures of the labour market, however, have not kept pace with these changes in female participation. Employment opportunities for the most part continue to be patterned on a traditionally male model of participation, i.e. continuous full-time employment following education and until retirement. Since child-care alternatives have not become available to allow women's participation profile to exactly resemble men's, women are thus in a no win situation. If they even hope to be able to participate in the paid labour force on an equal footing with men, they might as well give up the idea of ever having a family. On the other hand, if they have a family and withdraw from the paid labour force, as pointed out before, they leave themselves vulnerable and unprotected. In addition, women are penalized for this withdrawal if later they wish to re-enter the labour force: time spent raising children and managing a home is rarely considered good 'experience' by employers. Yet to attempt to combine work and a family under present circumstances puts both women's health and opportunity at risk under the weight of this double burden.

Is Part-time Work the Answer?

Part-time work is very often put forward as a possible solution to the problem of women who wish to combine paid employment with raising a family. It is far from a satisfactory solution however, because the

disadvantages of part-time work as presently available are just too numerous and too great, while many of the purported advantages of part-time work simply do not exist.

Flexibility in scheduling one's employment activity is probably the most frequently promoted benefit of part-time work for women, yet as we have seen, although the number of part-time jobs is growing, such jobs still remain only a small minority of job opportunities. Most part-time jobs are marginal and exist only so long as they directly profit business. Thus part-time jobs are essentially take it or leave it propositions with little room for worker 'choice' as far as scheduling is concerned. There may be some part-time jobs with regularly scheduled hours which coincide with the hours children spend in school, but these are few and far between. It will be remembered that the majority of part-time workers are on-call or work irregularly. There is probably nothing less convenient in terms of arranging alternative child-care, or less flexible, than working on an on-call basis. Jobs in continuous service industries which require part-time employees to work evenings and weekends are no solution either since they simply allow women to shoulder the bulk of child-care during normal working hours and work during the average worker's "leisure" time.

Another purported benefit of part-time work is that it supposedly allows women to maintain their professional skills while at the same time reducing

their working hours temporarily. In some cases this is a valid argument, particularly in occupations such as nursing or teaching. In these two occupations not only does part-time work allow women to keep in touch with their profession and its advances, but regular or temporary participation may be essential to maintaining one's professional certification. The problem is that only a minority of the part-time jobs presently available have a significant skill component. The employment skills of a woman working part-time may not depreciate quite as quickly as they would if she withdrew from the labour market completely, still they do depreciate significantly in most cases because part-time work cannot maintain skills which it doesn't require.

The short term disadvantages of part-time work are, as previously described, low pay, lack of fringe benefits and no job security. The long run disadvantages are no less serious. Skills depreciate as training is rarely offered to part-time workers. Years spent in part-time employment is experience which is virtually valueless. Advancement opportunities are almost non-existent. And at the end of the road what is there? Nothing. The exclusion of part-time workers from pension plans means that most have no retirement income to show for what may have been many years spent in the labour force on a part-time basis.

Although many continue to argue that part-time work is a good deal for women, the truth is, under present circumstances part-time work is nothing

short of exploitive. It uses women as a reserve army of labour and by so doing perpetuates and reinforces women's unequal social and labour market status. Why do women take such jobs? The answer is probably that women's limited opportunities in the labour market generally, and high levels of unemployment (higher for women than men) make part-time work the only option for many women.

IV Part-time Work as it Must Become

Your Council, The Advisory Council to Employment and Immigration Canada, has been asked to consider whether or not part-time employment should be encouraged in Canada. The CACSW advises against the expansion of part-time work if it is to be used as a means of further exploiting women or of pushing them gradually out of the labour market altogether. (There is concern within the teaching profession, for instance, that subtle pressure is being placed on women teachers more than on men to accept part-time work in order to maintain opportunities for new blood to enter the profession.) Nevertheless, we do see benefits for all workers in the availability of part-time employment if the circumstances surrounding such employment are significantly improved. The key then is that part-time work should be legitimized and regularized as well as expanded. By legitimization we mean that part-time work must become as accepted and as valid a pattern of labour force participation as full-time employment; the stigma and very real and serious disadvantages currently attached to it must be eliminated. Pro-rated wages and benefits must become the rule, not the exception. Part-time opportunities should not be limited to low skill occupations, but should be available throughout the range of occupations and at every skill level. An expansion of the number of regular part-time jobs will play an important role in the social legitimization of part-time work, and of course with job security, part-time employment will become a more attractive proposition for many workers. Regularity of part-time employment makes the possibility of training and advancement feasible, which in turn will help

break the cycle of low wages and marginality which presently entraps most part-time workers.

Would such an effort to "regularize" part-time work be worth it? There is evidence to show that it could be in the best interest of Canada and Canadians.

Part-time Work and Scarce Jobs

Canada has for a number of years now been experiencing high levels of unemployment. The average unemployment rate in 1966 for instance was 3.4%²¹; 251 thousand²² Canadians were out of work. Since then unemployment has risen rapidly, and virtually continuously, so that by August 1980, 7.7% (seasonally adjusted) of Canada's labour force, or 885 thousand Canadians could not find a job.²³ Many international experts predict generally higher levels of unemployment ahead as technological innovations displace, if not replace, human labour. Some foresee massive unemployment on a scale not seen in Canada since the Great Depression. Others suggest more optimistically that the new technology itself will generate employment opportunities to offset job losses in more traditional areas. Even

21 Statistics Canada, Historical Labour Force Statistics 1979, (Ottawa: 1980), , p. 122.

22 Statistics Canada, Historical Labour Force Statistics 1979, (Ottawa: 1980), p. 98.

23 Statistics Canada, The Labour Force: August 1980, (Ottawa: 1980), Table 1, p. 16.

if this latter prediction is correct, and we certainly hope it is, there will still be substantial dislocation and frictional unemployment as the economy adjusts to new production possibilities.

In Canada, employment remains the primary means of distributing income. As unemployment worsens, if the available work is not somehow spread over as many workers as possible, there will be a growing and dangerous gap between the rich and the poor in Canada, between those lucky enough to have a job and those who don't. While the forcible reduction of hours, and hence earnings, is a prospect which no one relishes, nevertheless this could become necessary in order to distribute the impact of unemployment more evenly. An expansion of good part-time opportunities, as discussed above, or other flexible work options could well have the effect of eliminating the need to forcibly reduce hours, as many workers would voluntarily choose to limit their participation for at least certain periods during their working lives, thereby reducing pressure on the job market.

Who Will Benefit from an Expansion of Better Part-time Work?

An expansion of good part-time opportunities would likely benefit all Canadians indirectly either by avoiding the crisis situation described above or by improving our economic performance, as will be described shortly. Certain groups of Canadian workers however, such as students, workers with outside responsibilities

and older workers, would benefit directly from such an expansion.

a) Students

Virtually all students working part-time presently are between the ages of 15 and 24, and they are almost without exception unmarried²⁴. An expansion of part-time employment opportunities would ease the transition for many young Canadians from the world of the classroom to the every day world of work. At the same time it would provide many with the income necessary to pursue their education and perhaps help some to make realistic and informed choices about the direction of their schooling.

Students in the future however are not all going to be young and unmarried. Rapid advances in technology are already resulting in the obsolescence of some skills and we can expect the pace of skill obsolescence to accelerate in the future as technological innovations now on the drawing board are put into production. It is likely that workers in the future will need to upgrade their skills or acquire new ones on a recurrent basis throughout their working lives. Since many workers will have dependents to support, part-time employment will be essential to provide income during these re-training periods. Improved part-time

24 Statistics Canada, The Labour Force: December 1979, (Ottawa: 1980), Table 86, p. 102. Ninety-six percent of students working part-time in 1979 were between the ages of 15 and 24. As well, 96% were unmarried.

employment, with pension coverage, etc., would help reduce the risks to workers of optional or voluntary re-training, and thereby, one would hope, reduce the demands on government to fund re-training for workers actually unemployed as a result of skill obsolescence. The provision of part-time opportunities would also benefit employers in many cases by allowing them to retain the skills of experienced employees in whom they may already have a training investment. Part-time work combined with part-time re-training thus could benefit everyone: the employee would have some income through the re-training process and experience less risk; the employer would maintain continuity and in the end have a more productive employee; and the costs to government of re-training or Unemployment Insurance/social assistance would likely be lower than would otherwise be the case.

b) Workers with Outside Responsibilities

'No man is an island.' No woman is either for that matter. No worker can be completely free from other than work-related responsibilities. A given worker may not have children to make demands upon his or her time; it may be an elderly parent, an ailing spouse, a handicapped sibling, a friend in crisis, or community or political activities, but virtually every worker at some point or another needs time and/or flexibility to be able to deal with such outside responsibilities. However, the growing number of dual-earner families with young children is likely to be the source of the greatest immediate demand for the introduction of various flexible work options, including part-time work. An improvement in the labour

market opportunities available to women, together with the elimination of disincentives inherent in reduced participation or temporary withdrawal from the labour force will hopefully lead to a more equal sharing of family responsibilities between the sexes and thus a greater demand for flexible work options by both male and female workers. The OECD in a recent publication discussed some of the social benefits of such a development:

The sharing of parental [responsibilities] would prove of benefit for the development of children for the presence of the father is considered by specialists to be as necessary to their upbringing as that of the mother. It would also tend to lessen the handicaps suffered by women in employment and promotion caused by their 'well-known' tendency to take leave for maternity, to stop working during the infancy of their children, and to be absent in case of child sickness. These periods of absence [or reduced participation] would be shared by men.²⁵

One benefit not mentioned is the psychological benefit to male workers of greater participation in the life and learning of their children.

c) Older Workers

A third specific group of workers who could benefit from improved part-time employment opportunities are older workers. Some older workers may wish to "phase in" retirement, reducing their labour force commitment in years prior to retirement and taking this time to develop interests which will make their years of complete retirement more enjoyable

²⁵ OECD, Equal Opportunities for Women, (Paris: 1979), p. 122.

and personally fulfilling. Other workers may wish part-time employment after what is now normal retirement age in order to maintain their incomes or simply because they desire to work, feeling this to be a valid form of contributing to society. In either case this option should be available to them.

d) Society as a Whole

A variety of benefits would accrue to society generally from an expansion of good part-time employment opportunities, for instance, the utilization of human resources previously untapped because these workers for whatever reason (health, family responsibilities, etc.) could not participate on a full-time basis. As these previously unemployed individuals become integrated into the labour force, a corresponding decline could occur in social assistance costs. Because more workers at all skill levels would be available for part-time employment once improved, employers would be able to manage their human resources more efficiently. They would be able to hire even skilled labour for half or three-quarter time if this was the amount of labour needed, thereby reducing costly under-utilization. This, together with the productivity gains which are frequently reported²⁶ of workers with shorter hours and improved employee morale, could improve the competitiveness of Canadian industry and result in a higher level of economic activity which would benefit all Canadians.

26 Stanley D. Nollen and Virginia H. Martin, Alternative Work Schedules: Parts 2 and 3, (New York: American Management Associations, 1978), p. 15. Other sources may be found referenced in Wendy Weeks, Part-time Work in Canada: A Study of Ideology and Implications for Women, (M.A. Thesis, McMaster University, 1977), p. 160, footnote 39.

V Traditional Concerns about the Expansion of
Part-time Employment

Employers

The concern most frequently expressed by employers is that expanding and/or improving part-time employment opportunities will increase costs. It must be acknowledged from the start that if part-time jobs are improved as we suggest, if they are accorded prorated wages and benefits as they should be, this will substantially eliminate the cost savings which are the major benefit to business of the present use of part-time workers. Beyond simply eliminating current cost savings, the extensive use of regular part-time workers may generate some additional costs - training, record keeping, additional supervision, etc. However, the following Table, based on the experiences of 460 U.S. firms who use permanent part-time workers, shows that while some have experienced increased costs, the majority either experienced no change in the costs described, or actually saw an improvement in their cost ratios.

Cost Effects of Permanent Part-time
Employment on the Organization

<u>Nature of Effect</u>	Changes Attributed to Part-time Employment (per- cent of all users)		
	<u>Better</u>	<u>No Change</u>	<u>Worse</u>
Personnel administration			
costs	16	45	39
Recruiting	46	37	17
Training	12	55	33
Equipment and facilities			
costs	15	71	14

Source: Stanley D. Nollen and Virginia H. Martin, Alternative Work Schedules: Parts 2 and 3, (New York: American Management Associations, 1978), Exhibit 8, p. 15.

It has also been found that those employers who have had no experience with permanent part-time employment tend to over-estimate what they anticipate as the disadvantages of part-time work²⁷.

Another objection frequently raised by business is that part-time workers are less committed and as a result turnover will be a problem. The current pattern of part-time work actually encourages high turnover because so little of it is regular; low wages and few benefits no doubt aggravate the situation. It seems rather unfair that after having created this situation, business should then use it as an excuse to deny workers a work option that might benefit many. Turnover is also a significant feature of part-time employment at the moment because of the large proportion of part-time workers who are students. There is always likely to be a somewhat higher than average turnover rate among students, since most probably wish full-time work at least for awhile following the completion of their education or re-training. But this is no reason to conclude that all part-time workers lack commitment, basing this conclusion on the arbitrary assumption that all part-time workers behave or will behave as students. In fact, in the American study²⁸ of firms using permanent part-time workers, 40% of firms reported lower turnover as a result of introducing regular part-time employment opportunities. Another 41% of firms reported no change in turnover and only 19% claimed that turnover had increased.

27 Nollen and Martin, pp. 19-21.

28 Nollen and Martin, p. 15.

Unions

The concerns of organized labour relate mostly to the threat they perceive part-time work to be to full-time employment. Unions are concerned that the use of "back-to-back" part-time workers will reduce the number of full-time jobs available. It should be noted that when part-time work is accorded pro-rated wages and benefits, the financial incentive for employers to use "back-to-back" part-time workers is substantially reduced. What would remain, however, would be the productivity gains previously mentioned, which might result in a higher level of economic activity and thus more job opportunities for all. Nevertheless, as has already been discussed, it is quite possible that part-time jobs could be substituted for full-time ones as a means of explicitly spreading the social impact of high unemployment. To many full-time workers the spectre of being reduced to the status of a part-time worker is indeed frightening because of the current unequal status in all respects of part-time work. In the event that voluntary adoption of flexible work options did not diminish pressure on the job market sufficiently to eliminate the need for more widespread reduction in hours, resistance would not be as great if reduced hours still accorded the same rate of pay and were accompanied by pro-rated fringe benefits. Unions fighting for a shorter work week may fear that the extensive use of part-time work will lead to a shorter work week with lower wages. This is a legitimate fear, but we would hope that part-time work would always be treated as a proportion of a full-time job and hours would be adjusted accordingly.

Unions also see part-time workers as difficult to organize, if not unorganizable, and thus both a barrier to unionization itself and a threat to union won benefits. Certainly as long as part-time work continues as an unregulated pool of cheap labour, there is a potential problem. However once part-time work is legitimized and regularized, and the structural disincentives to organizing part-time workers which exist in some Canadian jurisdictions are removed, then organizing part-time workers should become possible. Unions should be encouraged to include part-time workers within bargaining units to ensure that they do receive pro-rated wages and benefits. Also, as part-time work becomes accepted and as more and more workers move from full-time employment to part-time and back again as they desire or their lives demand, part-time workers will be increasingly familiar with the benefits of unionization and less likely to threaten it.

Workers

The most frequent reservations which individual workers have about part-time work stem from its present unequal status. They quite naturally identify part-time work with the following disadvantages - low pay, no fringe benefits, irregular and uncertain hours, little employment security and little possibility of

career advancement. Each of these disadvantages would be substantially reduced if not eliminated, if part-time work was legitimized and regularized as we suggest. In addition workers would enjoy the positive benefits of greater personal freedom.

VI Conclusion

The current pattern of part-time work is deplorable and exploitive. The concentration of women in such marginal employment contributes directly to the perpetuation of women's unequal status in Canadian society. Before part-time opportunities are expanded, part-time work should be legitimized, that is accorded pro-rated wages and benefits. Regular or permanent part-time employment opportunities in all occupations and at every skill level should be the objective rather than an expansion of part-time work as it presently exists.

The expansion of permanent part-time opportunities should only be part of a larger strategy to allow workers life-long flexibility in determining the distribution of their time between gainful and non-gainful pursuits. A linear pattern of participation consisting of pre-employment education, 30-45 years of full-time paid employment and then complete retirement, should not be the only option available to Canadian workers, particularly since such a pattern is inappropriate for many. Canadian workers should be able to alternate periods of employment, either full-time or part-time, with periods of non-gainful activity, be it for self-development, family responsibilities, or community involvement; and they should be able to do so without undue penalty. In addition to benefitting the individual, society as a whole could benefit from a

more effective use of our human resources, from increased productivity, and from the greater satisfaction of its individual members.

Of course we are hopeful that no worker will ever be forced to accept reduced hours. We suggest that the availability of flexible work options will help reduce pressure on the job market as individual workers voluntarily limit their participation for certain periods during their lives. However, the need to ration scarce jobs remains a grim possibility. We consider it far more acceptable that all should be affected to a small degree than that any one segment of the population should be left to bear the brunt alone.

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